

**DOWN HIGH SCHOOL**

28 STRANGFORD ROAD

DOWNPATRICK

BT30 6SL

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**Website:** www.downhighschool.org.uk

**Headteacher:** Mrs Maud Perry BATH PGCE PGDip NPQH

**Chair Board of Governors:** Mrs Avril Heenan LLB, MResTh

**CONTROLLED GRAMMAR SCHOOL**

**AGE RANGE:** 11-18

**ADMISSIONS NO:** 135

**ENROLMENT NO:** 934

**OPEN EVENING INFORMATION**

**Thursday 8 January 2026. Tours of the school from 6.30pm – 8.30pm.** We extend a warm invitation to P6 and P7 pupils and their parents to tour the school and meet our pupils and teachers. The Principal will speak in the Fowweather Hall at 6.15pm and at 8.15pm.

**TO PARENT(S)/CARER(S) NAMING DOWN HIGH SCHOOL AS A PREFERENCE ON YOUR CHILD’S TRANSFER APPLICATION.**

**When considering which children should be selected for admission, the Board of Governors will only take into account information which is detailed on or uploaded with the Transfer Application including where appropriate, the Total Standardised Age Score (TSAS) awarded by the Schools’ Entrance Assessment Group (SEAG). Parents should therefore ensure that all information pertaining to their child and relevant to the school’s Admissions Criteria is stated on or uploaded with the Transfer Application.**

**Entrance Test Results**

**The TSAS in the SEAG Entrance Assessment and the SEAG Unique Pupil Number should both be entered on the Transfer Application. The Statement of Outcomes received from SEAG indicating your child’s SEAG TSAS should be uploaded to the Transfer Application. Parents/Carers should note that they are required to produce documents verifying information pertinent to the school’s Admissions Criteria. If the documents are not uploaded with the Transfer Application, as detailed below, they will be requested after notification of an offer of a place at the school.**

**SEAG is very clear that its Entrance Assessment consists of two papers. A pupil who only takes one paper (i.e. either Paper 1 or Paper 2 but not both) will not have completed the full Entrance Assessment. Such pupils will, however, have their “single paper” marked and will receive a Statement of Outcomes. Outcomes for pupils who only sit one paper will have the designation “e” (for estimate) immediately after the Outcome, e.g. TSAS 196e; Band 4e. such pupils may be considered for admission to Down High School under Special Provision – see below.**

**Sub-criteria**

**Please ensure that you indicate on the Transfer Application which of the sub-criteria apply, and if more than one sub-criterion applies, all relevant sub-criteria should be indicated.**

**Special Circumstances and/or Special Provision**

**If you are making a claim for your child to be considered under Special Circumstances and/or Special Provision, please note that you are required to present all such material as you consider will assist the Board of Governors in determining if Special Circumstances and/or Special Provision apply and to enable an educational judgement to be made so that a whole number score can be assigned. You should upload the completed SC Form and/or SP Form (obtainable from the school) with appropriate documentation described below to the Transfer Application.**

**Further details can be found in the Section ‘SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES AND SPECIAL PROVISION’ below.**

**RESPECTIVE FUNCTIONS OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS AND PRINCIPAL IN RELATION TO ADMISSIONS TO THE SCHOOL**

The Board of Governors, with the assistance of the Principal, draws up the Admissions Criteria and applies them.

**ADMISSIONS CRITERIA FOR ENTRY OF PUPILS TO YEAR 8 IN SEPTEMBER 2026**

During the admissions procedure when applying the criteria punctual applications will be considered before late applications are considered. The application procedure opens on Tuesday 27 January 2026 at 12 noon (GMT) and

an application submitted by the closing date of Thursday 19 February 2026 at 12 noon (GMT) will be treated as a punctual application. An application received after 12 noon (GMT) on 19 February 2026 and up to 4.00pm on 24 February 2026 will be treated as a late application (see Waiting Lists Policy below).

The Board of Governors has determined that preference will be given to pupils who are resident in Northern Ireland at the time of their proposed admission to the school over pupils who are not so resident.

The child's Birth Certificate and proof of home address should be uploaded with the Transfer Application. Proof of address should be by any TWO of the following documents, with sensitive information removed: Recent bank/building society statement from the last three months; recent utility bill from the last three months (e.g. electricity, gas, landline telephone); addressed payslip; TV licence; letter awarding Child Benefit to the child or another letter relating to this benefit; mortgage statement; Land and Property Services rates demand; current driving licence; rental agreement.

Parents/Carers should note that they are required to produce documents verifying information pertinent to the school's Admissions Criteria. If the documents are not uploaded with the Transfer Application, as detailed above, they will be requested after notification of an offer of a place at the school.

**When considering which children should be selected for admission, the Board of Governors will only take into account information which is detailed on or uploaded with the Transfer Application, and the TSAS awarded by SEAG as set in the Statement of Outcomes (or the score assigned by it as a result of consideration of Special Circumstances and/or Special Provision). Parents should therefore ensure that all information pertaining to their child and relevant to the school's Admissions Criteria is stated on the Transfer Application or uploaded with the Transfer Application. Parents/Carers should note that they are required to produce documents verifying information pertinent to the school's Admissions Criteria.**

**The Board of Governors will not use as a criterion for admission the position of preference given to the school by the applicant on the Transfer Application; for example, a pupil who has chosen Down High School as a second (or other) preference (and whose application to their first preference school has been unsuccessful) will be considered in the same way as all first preference applicants.**

An academic criterion is used in the selection process, by reference to the TSAS awarded by SEAG following pupils sitting the Entrance Assessment operated by SEAG subject only to where the Board of Governors may assign to each pupil claiming "Special Circumstances" or "Special Provision" a score in accordance with the arrangements for "Special Circumstances" and "Special Provision" set out below. Those pupils will then be considered on the basis that the score assigned to them by the Board of Governors is equivalent to the TSAS that the child would have been awarded in the SEAG Entrance Assessment under normal circumstances. Such children will then be considered with all other children who have received a SEAG Entrance Assessment TSAS and the Admissions Criteria applied.

The following criteria will apply in the following order if the number of applications is greater than the Admissions Number: -

1. Preference will be given to those pupils for whom a TSAS has been awarded by SEAG or a score has been assigned (by the Board of Governors) in accordance with the arrangements for Special Circumstances and/or Special Provision set out below. The school will award places on the basis of these scores, in strict rank order, with the pupil(s) with the highest score being awarded the first place(s) firstly and then working in descending rank order until the number of places that would be awarded is equal to or greater than the admissions number. Note: where appropriate, the TSAS in the SEAG Entrance Assessment should be entered, along with the SEAG Unique Pupil Number, on the Transfer Application. *It is the responsibility of parents/carers to make sure that the Statement of Outcomes received from SEAG indicating their child's TSAS is uploaded with the Transfer Application.*

If, following the application of the above criterion, it is not possible to identify for admission the exact number of children equivalent to the admissions number by virtue of pupils with the same score being tied for the final place(s), the following sub-criteria will be applied in the stated order, to distinguish between such pupils: -

- (a) pupils with a sibling\* enrolled in the school for the 2025-2026 academic year [state name(s) and Registration Group(s) on the Transfer Application];

- (b) pupils who are the eldest\*\* child of the family\*\*\* (including only child) in their family to be eligible to transfer to a mainstream Post-Primary School (details to be supplied on the Transfer Application). Where applicable, twins (or other multiples) will be treated as joint eldest.

In the event of over-subscription after the above sub-criteria being applied, the tie-breaker will be used (see number 3 below).

For the purpose of the sibling\*, eldest\*\* child of the family\*\*\* sub-criteria, these will be interpreted in accordance with DE Circular 2025/12, Annex 2 of The Procedure for Transfer from Primary to Post Primary Education issued by DE i.e.:

**\*Sibling:** applicants qualify for the sibling criterion according to whether or not they have another ‘child of the family’ already attending the school in question.

**\*\*Eldest:** applicants qualify for the eldest criterion if they are the first child of the family eligible to apply for a post-primary mainstream school. Twins and other multiple birth applicants will be regarded as joint eldest. Eldest ‘child of the family’ eligible to transfer includes cases where the eldest child has completed his/her post-primary education, the eldest child of a reconstituted family, the eldest child of the family was statemented or attended a special school or where a family has relocated to Northern Ireland. Proof of eldest child should be uploaded with the Transfer Application – a letter on headed note paper, stating that the child is the eldest eligible child and that the family is known to the verifier, from one of the following who is not a family member of the applicant: a Primary School Principal, a medical practitioner, a solicitor, an elected public representative, a member of the clergy or a police officer.

**\*\*\*Child of the family:** defined in relation to the parties to a marriage or parties living together in the same household, means: a child of both of them; and any other child who has been treated by both of those parties as a “child of their family”. The Department of Education has been advised that this definition of a child of the family covers: a child born to a married couple; a child born to a co-habiting couple; a child of either of those people by a previous marriage or relationship; a child living with the same-sex partners whether there is a civil partnership under the Civil Partnership Act 2004 or not; an adopted or fostered child; a situation where, for example, an orphaned cousin is being brought up with the family.

## 2. Other pupils

If the number of pupils for whom a TSAS relating to the SEAG Entrance Assessment has been awarded (by SEAG) or a score assigned by the Board of Governors in accordance with the arrangements for Special Circumstances and/or Special Provision is less than the admissions number, the following sub-criteria will be applied, in the stated order, to distinguish between those pupils for whom a TSAS relating to the SEAG Entrance Assessment has not been awarded or a score assigned by the Board of Governors: -

- (a) pupils with a sibling\* enrolled in the school for the 2025/2026 academic year; [state name(s) and Registration Year Group(s) on the Transfer Application];
- (b) pupils who are the eldest\*\* child of the family\*\*\* (including only child) in their family; Where applicable, twins (or other multiples) will be treated as joint eldest.

## 3. Tiebreaker

If, following the application of the above criteria and sub-criteria, it is not possible to identify for admission the exact number of children equivalent to the admissions number (in the event of pupils being tied for the final place(s) on the basis of either the TSAS awarded by SEAG or a score assigned by the Board of Governors) then the following tie-breaker criteria will be applied, in the stated order, to distinguish between pupils tied for the final place(s).

- (i) pupils will be selected for admission on the basis of the initial letter of their surname (as entered on their Birth Certificate) in the order set out:

Mc N Q D A K R J Z P O X B G I U H W Mac M C S T E L V Y F

This order was determined by a randomised selection of the letters.

In the event of surnames beginning with the same initial letter, the subsequent letters of the surname will be used in alphabetical order.

In the event of two identical surnames, the alphabetical order of the initials of the forenames (as entered on their Birth Certificate) will be used.

- (ii) In the event of tie-breaker (i) not being sufficient to resolve the issue due to the pupils having the same surname and initials, pupils will be selected for admission on the basis of their date-of-birth with greater preference being given the older a child is.
- (iii) In the event of tie-breakers (i) and (ii) not being sufficient to resolve the issue due to the pupils having the same surname and initials and the same date of birth, the final selection will be by lot.

### **Important Note to Parents/Carers**

**Parents/Carers are strongly advised to indicate on the Transfer Application which of the above sub-criteria apply and, if more than one sub-criterion applies, all relevant sub-criteria should be indicated.**

**If a pupil meets sub-criterion (a) then parents/carers are asked to include the name and current Registration Group of the sibling\* on the Transfer Application.**

**If a pupil meets sub-criterion (b) parents/carers are asked to provide independent written confirmation [see above\*\*] to confirm that the child is the eldest eligible child of the family to transfer for a post-primary mainstream school. This should be uploaded to the Transfer Application.**

**The Score in the SEAG Entrance Assessment and the SEAG Unique Pupil Number should both be entered on the Transfer Application. The Statement of Outcomes notification received from SEAG indicating your child's SEAG Entrance Assessment TSAS should be uploaded to the Transfer Application. This information will be verified by the school.**

**Parents are asked to include on the Transfer Application the name of the child and date of birth as entered on his or her Birth Certificate in order to facilitate the use of the tie-breaker set out above.**

### **SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES AND SPECIAL PROVISION – GENERAL INFORMATION**

The purpose of a claim for Special Circumstances and/or Special Provision is so that a child can be assigned a whole number score equivalent to that which he or she would have obtained in the SEAG Entrance Assessment under normal conditions. Consideration of a claim for Special Circumstances and/or Special Provision consists of two parts: the first requires the consideration of whether there is sufficient material to permit a child to be considered as having Special Circumstances or attracting Special Provision, or both; if a child is permitted to be considered as having Special Circumstances or as attracting Special Provision or both, the second part of the consideration requires an educational judgement to be made on the totality of the material presented to the School so that a score equivalent to that which the child would have obtained in the SEAG Entrance Assessment under normal conditions can be assigned.

***It is for parents/carers to present all such material as they consider will assist the school in performing both parts of the consideration described above. All such material should be uploaded to the Transfer Application.***

### **Educational Evidence to be provided in support of a claim for Special Circumstances and/or Special Provision**

In reaching the educational judgement needed to assign a score equivalent to the TSAS that the child would have been awarded in the SEAG Entrance Assessment under normal circumstances, the Board of Governors will consider the totality of the material presented (uploaded to the **Transfer Application**) by the parents/carers. This material may include any or all of the following:

- i) The TSAS awarded by SEAG in the Entrance Assessment (if the child sits two SEAG Entrance Assessments) or the estimate score (e) provided by SEAG (if the child only sits one of the SEAG Entrance Assessments, due to the child's illness, or other unforeseen circumstances);
- ii) The results for the child of any standardised tests conducted in P 5, P 6 and P 7;
- iii) Comparative information from the primary school, including the results, without names, for other children in the child's P 7 class of any standardised tests conducted in P 5 and P 6 and P 7, SEAG Entrance Assessment practice paper Scores;
- iv) Any other relevant material.

### **SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES**

Down High School has academic performance as its first criterion, subject only to the consideration of problems which may have affected performance in the SEAG Entrance Assessment and which are supported by independent documentary evidence of appropriate nature, including educational evidence. These problems are commonly referred to as 'Special Circumstances'.

Please note:

- if a claim for the consideration of Special Circumstances is made in respect of matters for which special Access Arrangements were granted for a pupil, the Board of Governors will take into account the fact that the pupil was granted special Access Arrangements for those matters.

Parents/Carers who wish to apply to the school under Special Circumstances should complete the relevant SC Form (obtainable from the school) stating the precise reason why they believe the child should be considered for Special Circumstances. The SC form and appropriate documentary evidence should be uploaded with the Transfer Application. The Board of Governors will consider each application for Special Circumstances. Where a Special Circumstances claim is upheld, the Board of Governors will, following consideration of the information available, assign an appropriate score for the child equivalent to SEAG Entrance Assessment TSAS that the child would have been awarded in the SEAG Entrance Assessment under normal circumstances. Such children will then be considered with all other children who have received a SEAG Entrance Assessment TSAS and the Admissions Criteria applied.

The onus is upon parents to ensure that all relevant supporting information and accompanying form(s) are provided to the school. The Information Commissioner's Office website [www.ico.gov.uk](http://www.ico.gov.uk) contains guidance for parents to access information held by primary schools in relation to their child.

### **Details of Other Circumstances**

Where it is claimed that a pupil's performance in the Entrance Assessment has been affected by other circumstance, it is the responsibility of the parents/carers to set out in the relevant SC Form (obtainable from the school) precise details of the circumstance and append independent evidence to corroborate its existence. It should be noted that independent evidence will carry greater weight.

The Board of Governors will consider the application for Special Circumstances. Where this is accepted, the Board of Governors will assign, on the basis of a consideration of the information available, an appropriate score for the child equivalent to SEAG Entrance Assessment TSAS that the child would have been awarded in the SEAG Entrance Assessment under normal circumstances. Such pupils will then be considered on the basis of this score with all other pupils who have received a SEAG TSAS and the Admissions Criteria applied.

### **Special Provision**

Special Provision will apply for:

- (a) pupils whose parents/carers wish them to transfer from schools outside Northern Ireland;
- (b) pupils who have received more than half their primary education outside Northern Ireland;
- (c) children who due to a serious medical issue supported by appropriate documentary evidence or for a demonstrably valid reason also supported by appropriate documentary evidence were either unable to sit the SEAG Entrance Assessment OR have an estimated outcome from SEAG because they only sat one of the two Entrance Assessment papers.

Note: All those seeking admission should sit the SEAG Entrance Assessment, with the exception of those pupils who take up residence in Northern Ireland after the 25 September 2025.

Parents/Carers who wish to apply to the school under Special Provision should complete the relevant SP Form (obtainable from the school), stating the precise reason why they believe the pupil is eligible for consideration under Special Provision, and providing appropriate independent documentary evidence, which must be uploaded to the Transfer Application. Where the circumstance is medical the school will require the production of evidence that the pupil was examined by a medical practitioner in relation to the illness at the time of the assessment. It should be noted that independent evidence will carry greater weight.

For those pupils whose parents wish them to transfer from a school outside Northern Ireland, applications must be made for Special Provision via the Education Authority Online Portal for Year 8 transfer on or before noon on 19 February 2026.

The Board of Governors will consider the application for Special Provision. Where this is accepted, the Board of Governors will assign, on the basis of the information provided, an appropriate score for the child equivalent to the SEAG Entrance Assessment TSAS that the child would have been awarded in the SEAG Entrance Assessment under normal circumstances. The pupil will then be considered on the basis of this score with all other pupils who have received a SEAG TSAS and the Admissions Criteria applied.

**Duty to Verify**

Those making applications should note that the information contained within an application that qualifies the child for admission will be verified. The Board of Governors therefore, reserves the right to require such supplementary evidence as it may determine to support or verify information on any Transfer Application. Those making applications should also note the provision of false information or incorrect information, or the failure to provide verifying documents according to the required deadline, may result in either the withdrawal of a place or the inability of the school to offer a place.

**It is the responsibility of parents/carers to ensure that the Transfer Application is completed in full and that all relevant information is uploaded with the Transfer Application.**

If the Board of Governors becomes aware of any irregularity in the details uploaded or included on the Transfer Application, it reserves the right to reject the application made on behalf of the child for admission to the school.

**Waiting Lists Policy**

Down High School operates a Waiting Lists Policy. For Year 8, all applications for admission to Year 8 that were initially refused will be automatically placed on the Year 8 waiting list. New applications, late applications and applications where new information has been provided will also be added to the Year 8 waiting list. This waiting list will be in place until 30 June 2027, that is, the end of Year 8. Please contact the school if you wish your child’s name to be removed from the Year 8 waiting list.

Should a vacancy arise after the date upon which placement notifications have been issued from the Education Authority, the procedure outlined in the Admissions Criteria for entry to Year 8 will be followed in relation to those applications on the Year 8 waiting list. The school will contact you if your child gains a place in the school by this method.

**APPLICATIONS AND ADMISSIONS TO YEAR 8**

Year	Admissions Number	Total Applications	Total Admissions
2023/24	128	187	138*
2024/25	128	176	136*
2025/26**	128	143	133

*\*Figure includes temporary variation to admissions number*

**\*\*The Total Admissions for year 2025/2026 includes all Year 8 children admitted to the school including those who have a statement of special educational needs and/or may be attending SPiMS.**  
(SPiMS = Specialist Provision in Mainstream School)

**ADMISSION CRITERIA FOR ENTRY TO YEARS 9-12**

1. The school will offer such places as it has available to those pupils who seem to be most suitably qualified on application of the criteria listed in criterion 2.

The appropriate number of possible admissions to the school will be determined so that the total enrolment figure does not exceed the number allowed by the Department of Education for Northern Ireland.

Places will only be offered to pupils in a particular year group where to do so would not be prejudicial to the efficient use of resources.

2. Applications for entry to Years 9 – 12 will be considered with respect to the following criteria which are listed in order of decreasing importance. The application must be accompanied by a completed copy of Form DHS 9/12 APP.

(i) *Academic record*

The application must be accompanied by standardized test scores and academic information such as results in external tests, school reports, marks with year averages (in year positions with total number in year group), in internal examinations etc which would indicate that the pupil would be likely to be able to deal successfully with the courses of study provided by the school and would enable the Board of Governors to make a judgement on the pupil's academic ability.

(ii) *Personal Record*

Evidence, such as a Headteacher's letter, indicating the pupil's record in terms of attendance, punctuality, behaviour etc must accompany the application.

(iii) *Appropriateness of the curriculum available*

It is expected that in order to ensure efficient use of resources pupils entering Down High School will take on a full programme of courses and lessons. The Board of Governors will also take into account how well any external examination courses being taken by a pupil match those that are offered within the Down High School timetable.

(iv) *Particular talents or aptitudes*

The Board of Governors will take into account any special talents, aptitudes or achievements of the applicant especially if these make it more likely that the pupil would make a significant contribution to the school's extracurricular activities. Evidence of any such talents or aptitudes must accompany the application.

(v) *Special Circumstances*

The school will take into account any special circumstances including medical, social and personal issues which are brought to its attention. Where appropriate, documentary evidence must accompany the application.

(vi) *Existing links*

The Board of Governors will take into account any link with the school and in particular whether the pupil has a brother or sister in attendance at the school.

3. *Application of Criteria*

If the number of applicants exceeds the number of places available in light of the restrictions outlined in criterion 1 then all applications for entry into Years 9 – 12 will be considered with respect to the criteria outlined in criterion 2. The Board of Governors will determine for each applicant a numerical total which will determine the applicant's position on the reserve list which will be arranged in order of decreasing numerical total. Places will normally be assigned, following a meeting with the Principal, on the basis of this order, provided this would not be contrary to the restrictions outlined in criterion 1.

The usual deadline for applications for admission to Year 9 – 12 at the start of the following academic year is the end of April. Applications received by this deadline will be considered by the Board of Governors during May. Depending on the number of pupils in individual year groups it may be possible for the Board of Governors to make a definite offer of places immediately after the May meeting in some cases. Nevertheless it will not be possible to finalise the number of pupils to be admitted until after the results in external examinations and consequent decisions for the pupils in years 12 and 13 are known, i.e. until the start of the academic year. The Board of Governors reserves the right to consider any application received after the end of April.

Applicants to Years 9 – 12 who are not admitted will remain on the reserve list for the duration of the following academic year unless a request for the application to be withdrawn is received.

In practice it may take the first few weeks in September for all decisions relating to entry at the start of the academic year to be finalised. For the remainder of the academic year the reserve list will be maintained and will also contain pupils whose applications were received after the end of April as well as those received during the course of the following academic year. If a place becomes available during the course of the following academic year due to a pupil leaving the school, then a place will be offered to the applicant with the highest numerical total on the reserve list provided this is not contrary to the restrictions outlined in criterion 1.

In the event of two pupils having identical numerical totals, the following tie-breaker will be used. Pupils will be selected for admission on the basis of the initial letter of their surname (as entered on their Birth Certificate) in the order set out below:

**Mc N Q D A K R J Z P O X B G I U H W Mac M C S T E L V Y F**

This order was determined by a randomised selection of the letters. In the event of surnames beginning with the same initial letter, the subsequent letters of the surname will be used in alphabetical order. In the event of two identical surnames, the alphabetical order of the initials of the forenames (as entered on their Birth Certificate) will be used.

4. Parents and guardians should note that it is their responsibility to ensure that all relevant information and evidence that would be needed for the Board of Governors to adequately consider the application is attached to the application form. A completed copy of Form DHS 9/12APP should also be attached to the application form. The school reserves the right to seek additional information, e.g. from the child's current and previous schools.

The Board of Governors reserves the right to require such supplementary evidence as it may determine to support or verify any of the information provided. Such evidence would be requested if and when the offer of a place is made. It is important that all parents and guardians understand that the provision of false or incorrect information, or the failure to provide information or evidence thereof within the specified deadline, will result in the withdrawal of the place at the school.